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By-Elsner, Paul A.
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This state director's view of a junior college president was given at the Presidents' Institute (May 1969). In Colorado, the State Board prefers that the president be chosen at the local level by faculty, students, and local board members. His qualifications must fit the climate and values of the state system: e.g., he must de-emphasize the transfer program, encourage new clientele for post high school education, have admission policies that reach the poor and culturally deprived, provide vocational courses in the lowest skills and the highest technical levels, maintain flexibility in community services. More generally, he should be aware of such trends as the shift from local to state control, an ever-broadening clientele, increasing democratization of higher education, some disenchantment with junior college aims, growing potential for conflict, a balance between state control and local autonomy, more competition for scarce resources. If he is starting a new college, he can profit from others' experience, not only in facilities planning, but also in taking the opportunity to introduce a less orthodox philosophy, directing resources to those most in need of them, and shaking off such traditional practices as the grading system, subject-matter departments, and selective admissions. He must try to bring ethnic minorities into the stream of education, promote a less institutional climate, teach low-skill jobs without literacy requirements, and, above all face up to this exacting position. (HH)

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THE PRESIDENTIAL PRISM: FOUR VIEWS

A State Officer's View of the Community College President

Paul A. Elsner

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An Address Given Before

J. C. L. P. Presidents' Institute

University of Colorado - University of California, Berkeley

Scottsdale, Arizona
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A State Officer's View of the Community College President

Paul A. Elsner

When your conference hosts asked if I would present a paper expressing a view of the president as seen from a state board prospective, my reactions to this task were somewhat mixed: First, I have not clearly defined in my own mind what a state director ought to be, let alone the prescribing of features or characteristics the president ought to possess; secondly, no model of an ideal president slips easily into my mind. So it is presumptuous, indeed, for me to offer views of what a president ought to be, or what he ought not to be.

Although Colorado has been involved in several selection processes for new presidents for our developing system, the Board and our state staff have attempted to shift the burden of selection and appointment to the local level where we think it belongs. Colorado's most recent selection process for a president involved the faculty, students and local governing board members in about equal representation. Selecting a president is the least precise thing governing boards do; therefore, we are pleased to shift this responsibility to involve as many at the institutional level as possible.

I would hope that these introductory comments might explain why delineating a view of a president's role from my vantage point can be anything but objective, but let me posit some qualifications for your consideration:

First, the state system under which the president operates does promote and adhere to sets of values. These values set a climate and it is likely that this climate affects the president in some distinct ways. We make no bones

about the values the system promotes and our local councils and state board spokesmen are clear as to what these are:

(1) The avoiding of a disproportionate emphasis on the transfer program, to the point of constricting it to achieve realistic program balance.

(2) The major emphasis of the institutions in the system is to be that of generating new clientele to higher education; those who heretofore have not opted for nor seen the possibility of post high school opportunities.

(3) The maintaining of admissions practices and program services that reach the less economically able and culturally advantaged - with a view to bringing greater variety of age groups and representative backgrounds onto the campuses.

(4) A major commitment to occupational oriented programs covering varying degrees of time commitments to complete - some intermittent in nature covering wide ranges of skills from the lowest to the more sophisticated technician level.

(5) Finally, a major commitment to institutional flexibility - taking services to the people whenever possible, assuming that colleges achieve their identities by the services they render rather than by the physical space they occupy or by the institutional or organizational features they perpetuate.

If these system values are not altogether agreeable to our Colorado presidents here today, I suppose "what we've got here is a failure to communicate".

Besides a strong desire on the part of the Colorado State Board to remove constraints and an equal desire among our presidents to affect the destiny of their institutions through their own individual styles and processes, so as not to be overly burdened by system controls and restraints, which we deeply respect as a Board, there is not much more I need to mention in regard to the effect of system values on a president. These system values can, however, be so overriding that they impose indirect and uncomfortable constraints on its members and, of course, everyone would agree that this would be bad.

Having acknowledged the influence that a system can have on its member presidents, let's abruptly move from a Colorado context, which is uncomfortably autobiographical anyway, to a more long range view of the community college president as seen from a state officer, regardless of what system he belongs to.

The president must respond to some significant trends in junior college education. These I will list as follows:

(1) Trends from local to state control. As junior colleges become part of a wider, more embracing jurisdiction, it would behoove presidents to learn to work within systems, but retain their own institutional identities. The forces of movement from local to state control sometimes are so vigorous that institutions can be swallowed up in the process.

(2) Trends in clientele. Presidents must adapt their programs so that their colleges serve a broader, more diversified, usually less able, kind of clientele. We must gear up for more Blacks, more Mexican-Americans, more diversity in ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds - this will presuppose a drastic overhall of the curriculum to accomodate

the changing needs of the community college's clientele. It is not unreasonable to expect that some of our urban junior colleges will reach racial compositions of upwards from 80% to 90% Black.

(3) Trends toward universal opportunity for higher education. Presidents must currently respond to aggressive state and national movements for democratization of our education. The implications of a fully democratized institution, truly open to its publics, places before presidents challenges heretofore not part of our traditional frame of reference about junior college education.

(4) Trends toward greater disenchantment with the enterprise. Presidents must become attuned to responding to dissident clientele who are ready to challenge the assumptions on which the junior college is built. This does not include just militants but includes a growing number of thoughtful people in the junior college movement who are ready to introspectively examine some of the premises on which junior college education is based.

(5) Greater potential for conflict and dissent. If we step up efforts to democratize opportunity for the broader segments of our population, the potential for internal stress and conflict increases. Potentially the junior college sector holds the greatest potential for the most volatile kinds of revolutionary forces and efforts toward upheaval; and, if we truly democratize education by bringing the disenchanted and disaffiliated into our colleges, we cannot, as

administrators, expect these same people to be grateful.

(6) Greater relinquishing of role to coordinating bodies. Perhaps one of the greatest challenges of the junior college president involves balancing the advantages of system identity with that of maintaining sufficient local autonomy and institutional viability. In one sense the junior college sector stands to benefit the most compared to other sectors of higher education by joining larger partnerships; yet moving toward system identity can pose a threat to the individuality local institutions seek. While on one hand we need the political strength system identity permits, some paranoia on the part of junior college people is justified in that larger, more powerful centralized bodies do indeed pose a threat to the junior college movement.

(7) More competition for scarce resources. Junior college presidents must vigorously get into the scramble for new sources of revenue. Keen competition exists for resources on the legislative and political level and junior college presidents must join such effective partnerships that bring pressure to bear on legislative groups and other political bodies - if not just for their mere survival economically.

Presidents would do well to re-examine their personal priorities. If one views the daily experiences of each of the presidents in this room, perhaps as much as 2/3 of their time is spent in developing or building or arranging or making

available some physical space or campus for the college's operation. It is conceivable that within the context of our present social revolution and the complex societal forces at play in our present time, building the physical campus might actually be a trivial pre-occupation. However, since buildings and attractive campuses are accepted symbols of accomplishment, most of our new presidents will expend disproportionate energies in these tasks.

Conservative estimates indicate that metropolitan Denver will require $130 million worth of capital construction for its community college system. I would ask you to think for a moment about what kinds of outreach, community action, program services, comprehensive curricula, individual counseling, services to disadvantaged students - how many of these commitments could we meet over a ten year period with $130 million?

Presidents should be willing to re-examine the successes of prototype junior colleges that have been created in the past. One of the interesting facets of the junior college movement is the professional upward mobility of its participants. Many a president can name his salary these days by bringing his practical skills of getting a college started with efficiency and dispatch over a reasonable period of time, ranging from 90 days to the prescribed time enumerated by his local board or state enabling legislation. Most all of us here have had the experiences of "tooling up", so to speak, for the opening of an institution under these kinds of demanding conditions. We have developed a kind of pragmatic "role up your sleeves" attitude about our work. While your pragmatism on one hand makes the junior college movement refreshing and exciting, your movement lacks self-introspection. It almost appears that a "cook book" approach can suffice as the major input for getting a college started, say in a period of 6 months, 90 days, and rarely more than one year.

Most of us, I think, are tempted to accept a priori what a junior college should be by our past experiences. Our current junior college philosophy hardly restricts us to much orthodoxy. You presidents have unprecedented opportunity to redirect the movement in fresh and exciting ways. If you examine existing practices you will find that by and large we are developing principally transfer institutions whose students do not always transfer at the rate consistent with either institutional or general public expectations, that our institutions are basically prototypes of white, middle-class society, whose students are neither distinctly poorer nor distinctly more successful than their counter-part four-year institutions, that by and large these institutions have attempted to democratize opportunity through technical programs whose content is often more demanding than transfer programs, that by and large the multifaceted functions such as community service, developmental programs and counseling services do not distinguish themselves from other institutions of higher education in any principal way, that by and large junior colleges bring few resources to bear on those clientele who come to us with clinically based and culturally related learing problems. Perhaps your new institutions are an exception to these generalizations - I hope so.

The president must constantly re-adjust and re-align the institution's aims to meet the changing values of its clientele. Prior to the land grant institutions in the 19th century, American higher education was destined to be elitest in nature. At that time its most recent and obvious historical antecedents were European. Higher education's major purpose at this time was the preservation of tradition and manners appropriate to select classes. We are still shaking off the traditional vestiges of the European model.

Without the formation of a basic idiology the junior college movement will spin itself out along the traditional models of the four-year colleges and

universities. Some major part of the current crises in higher education results from the conflict between traditional institutional values and those more evolving, dynamic values held by the institution's clientele - namely the students. If junior colleges choose to copy the four-year sector, our impact on society can scarcely be felt. In general, most of which we borrow or inherit from the four-year college and university legacy is antithetical to the junior college's major purpose - the democratization of higher education.

Let's examine some of the legacies:

(a) The grading system: I have yet to rationalize with any degree of satisfaction what purpose the "D" and the "F" and the "WF" grades serve - other than their punitive value.

(b) Its internal structure: I have lately raised the question in my own mind why community colleges and junior colleges must be organized along the pattern of the four-year college or university. While there is some kind of organizational taxonomy one might invoke relative to subject content, there appears to be less reason for discretely organizing the junior college under the inherent traditional structures of subject matter and departments and divisions characteristic of the more traditionally oriented four-year colleges. There appears to be nothing classical about the community college. Its clientele and services should be constantly shifting. Its physical needs and time requirements should not follow the traditional blocks of time such as semesters or credit hours, for each of its diverse kinds of activity. Some occupational curricula have no relationship to the block

unit credit structure of the academic courses. In fact, there is considerable overlapping and implicit cacophony in the components of the community college. Therefore, its organizational structure might suggest different models and approaches. It is conceivable that a community college might be divided into five major thrusts, none of which are discrete and separate from one another. A community college might likely offer a transfer program much smaller in proportionate representation of the college's total resources than what is now commonly practiced. In contrast to the 75% to 80% currently enrolled in transfer programs, the proportionate percentages could be reduced to 30% to 40%; higher perhaps in less populated remote areas. Second, technical programs of a fairly sophisticated nature, usually of two year duration would be offered. Certainly lower skilled vocational type programs of shorter duration would constitute a third distinct thrust, consisting of 30 day, 60 day, 90 day, 6 months and occasionally a year's duration. Fourth, it might offer a continuing education-developmental type program, and last, it would offer some kind of community service type of program. These emphases in the community college really complement and overlap each other. I see one no less important than another. It would not sadden me, for example, to see the student body enrollment about equally divided in some kind of changing and shifting proportions depending on the community characteristics.

What is the validity of always having a Dean of Instruction paralleled by a Dean of Student Services paralleled by a Business Manager, under which are subsumed such categories as Chairman of the English Department, Assistant Dean for Counseling and Guidance, etc. There must be other possibilities of organization that tie, for example, admissions officers to continuing education, counseling services to remedial programs, community services to developmental and outreach neighborhood kinds of programs, etc.

Why must a "dean" be a "dean"? Can an overall omnibudsman adept in communication skills augment the president's office or the student services offices, etc.? Would it be possible to have a community service program staffed by lay personnel divided perhaps between very real community activities such as the local Parks and Recreation Department, neighborhood youth center staff, coordinators and teachers of handicapped and disadvantaged children, etc. - all of which could help move us away from our current community service philosophy which I cannot help but regard as very arid and very trivial.

(c) One final legacy which I cannot pass over - that the processes of admission and selection into collegiate life of any kind assumes that everyone must be screened for suitability to that life. I would encourage you presidents to explore ways in which you might make admissions to your colleges as a matter taken for granted among all your publics, but particulary those who are not coming to your colleges.

Presidents must come to deal with their "hang-ups". We cannot begin to talk about all of our "hang-ups" today, but let's take one that plagues some of us more than others.

First, our covert reluctance to bring black people and other minority groups into the educational mainstream. The Kerner Report is explicit in that it has asserted that white society is deeply implicated in the gheto. White society created it; white society perpetuates it; white society condones it. If a community, like some I have recently observed, has 18% to 20% of its lower elementary and secondary school populations represented by Spanish sur-named peoples and the local community college in that very same community has only a handful of Spanish sur-named students, I submit that both the community and the institution condone this lack of representation of minority groups. In very subtle ways you, as junior college educators, endorse the status quo.

Next, we have already talked about the effects of tradition on the junior college movement. In one sense we still suffer from this "hang-up" as well. We like the ritualistic features of higher education because we still lecture to people in classrooms where the research evidence clearly indicates that we can retain as much by reading a lecture as by listening to it. We still select, screen and spue out students with more vigor and more energy than we have ever applied in helping the student while he is in the institution.

The other day I spoke with the principal of the Emily Griffith Opportunity School in Denver, whose primary mission has always been to serve as diverse a student population as possible through vocational, technical and general education programs. This administrator had attempted to gather more data about his institution's student population and with this objective in mind, he decided to have them fill out a questionnaire in a room usually reserved for testing. He had observed that because he had asked prospective and new registrants to fill out a test-like questionnaire that 60% dropped out between the door of the registrar's office and the door leading into the test room which was only one half dozen doorways down the hall. I suspect that the longest walk a Negro or

Spanish-American student makes while he is enrolling in a white institution is the line from the registrar's office to the counselor's office. In brief, you presidents must de-institutionalize your colleges. I am afraid that all of us scare most of our clientele away just by the size and configuration and placement of offices on the campus. The closest thing a white, average american confronts that even closely resembles the kind of frustration I elude to here, goes something like the country boy from the midwest who walks into a tall, big,shiny office building in Kansas City or Denver feeling like a piece of lint.

Moving on, maybe we are too "hung-up" on respectibility and standards. We seem convinced that the whole universe would crumble if we offer courses in fender bending or such other hands oriented, dirty type shop courses. We are concerned, for example, that the content of these courses may not hold up under the scrutiny of our colleagues. It matters too little in our minds whether the course or training program makes the person employable. I have observed, for example, some technical programs that begin in the first semester with analytic geometry and calculus, when in fact, the student enrolled in the curricula for purposes of pursuing a career in electronics or fabrication or manufacturing processes, etc. We are inclined to defer the actual lab application and training component until after the student has proven himself in such allied courses as English, Sociology, Political Science, etc. Our basic rationale is that our students must have a general education or a liberal education framework before they can be trained for employability.

And then, we completely reverse our posture on the black studies "hang-up". We argue that our black students must derive some useful application out of their studies and that to suspend them in a black studies curricula leads them to no productivity or any ultimate employment. What we fail to see, I believe, is that black studies programs can be justified for their own sake just as general

education programs or humanities requirements or social science requirements are no less or no more relevant than a course in black history or in contemporary black literature, etc. Perhaps if we would look at our own curricula for a moment we might experience the revelation that we have for years been launching a huge white studies program in the sky.

Last, I suppose a president must come to know who he is. The prospect of holding some of the presidential positions represented in this room, particularly those of you in intense urban or racial settings, seems very awesome to me. I cannot say that I have formed sufficiently consistent frameworks to meet some of the tests you are now facing or are about to face. This last qualification seems like a good place to conclude.

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